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MAGTF'S FOR NEF'S
Revolutionary Adaptive Force Packaging or Getting By With Less

by

Major Patrick M. O'Donogue
United States Marine Corps

A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: 

08 February 1994

Paper directed by Captain H. Ward Clark, USN
Chairman, Joint Military Operations Department
LtCol D. S. Burgess, USMC
Joint Military Operations Department
Research Advisor

Approved by:


Research Advisor


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Abstract of

MAGTF'S AND NEF'S
Revolutionary Adaptive Force Packaging or Getting By With Less

As amphibious shipping transitions to a 36 ship fleet and the capability to forward deploy with a sustainable expeditionary force decreases, what concepts will best allow the CINC to retain the warfighting capability he has come to expect from naval forces? Concepts for Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) employment within the notional Naval Expeditionary Force (NEF) are explored. Limitations of sustainability and mission accomplishment of present MAGTF configurations are addressed. Projections as to the viability of future expeditionary force packages are portrayed. Finally, recommendations as to future Navy-Marine Corps actions are summarized.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The effort to conceptualize and translate the framework as outlined in the Naval White Letter...*From the Sea* into a doctrinal reality has led to the idea of the Naval Expeditionary Force (NEF). It is hoped that this concept, viewed as a holistic approach to the realities of a declining defense budget and force structure, will serve as the vehicle that will allow naval forces to adequately meet the future threat. This approach is known as adaptive force packaging.

Adaptive force packaging is taking the flexibility inherent to the joint military environment and naval forces in particular and translating it into a coherent and comprehensive groupings of forces (task organization). These forces then can be tailored for a specific mission or reflect an organizational bias intended to meet a longer term commitment. To many it reflects task organizing on a national scale, across service lines, in order to meet the projected threat and increase cost savings.

However, does adaptive force packaging encapsulate the necessary capabilities need for a given military scenario or is it merely an inventive way of cutting costs without providing adequate capability for naval forces-specifically Marine forces? Within the naval establishment, does the NEF concept and its attendant use of the MAGTF give planners and

executors the necessary force structure and operational flexibility to meet standing and projected requirements of the combatant Commanders-in-Chief (CINC)?

Thus we have the current and future scenarios of declining resources and increased tasking. Will superior technology, better trained and motivated personnel, and the determination to beat your enemy be enough to lead U. S. forces to victory? It certainly seems that the approach dictated by the parameters already listed would drive commanders toward relying on those intangibles rather than on the qualitative and quantitative advantage presently enjoyed.

CHAPTER II

THE NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Naval Expeditionary Forces are envisioned to be a cohesive, task organized, forward operating Navy/Marine Corps team.¹ They are tailored for joint operations and have the inherent capability to serve as the core of a Joint Task Force (JTF).

The impact of technology is apparent. Increased capability in command, control and communications delivered by current and future systems enables a single commander to lift somewhat the fog of war and control forces that are acting simultaneously across a broad area and in all dimensions of the battlefield.²

The NEF refocuses the naval effort to ensure that

- littoral warfare is accommodated
- joint warfare is truly carried out on land, sea and air
- naval doctrine is developed and constituted within this focus (...From the Sea)³

To ensure that the above listed tenets are carried out, NEF command organization is based on four principals

- Centralized responsibility and delegated authority
- Shatter the enemy's cohesion through operational maneuver

- Fully integrate the synergy inherent to combined arms

- Ensure unity of command⁴

NEF's will be functionally organized within six warfare areas: Amphibious Warfare Commander (AMWC), Landing Force Commander (LFC), Sea Warfare Commander (SWC), Air Warfare Commander (AWC), Area Air Defense Commander (AADC), and Space and Electronic Warfare Commander (SEWC). They are to be coequal in status within the command structure.⁵

The Naval Expeditionary Force will consist of two types-- the Naval Expeditionary Task Group (NETG) and the Naval Expeditionary Task Force (NETF). The NETG combines forces from existing carrier battles groups (CVBG) and amphibious ready groups (ARG) under the aegis of the battlegroup commander and his staff, integrating Marine and amphibious expertise as needed. The most likely force mix will center around one carrier and one LHA/LHD with their respective embarked carrier air wing and Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). This is envisioned as the standard force package for routine deployments and continuous forward presence. The standing NETG is most likely employed in a lesser regional contingency and those operations short of war. (See Appendix I)

The NETF, however, will be task organized for a specific situation, most likely a major regional contingency. It will be structured around a numbered fleet commander and his staff. The NETF staff retains the six warfare commanders of the NETG

and adds a Force Logistics Commander (FLC). The core of this organization is envisioned to be multiple carrier battle groups and a Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), a brigade equivalent size organization.⁶ (See Appendix I)

A comparison of mission capability between the two organizations is similar, with the increased battlespace dominance afforded by the NETF. Both advertise forcible entry capability and can sustain their forces for 15 and 30 days, respectively.⁷

Key to this concept is the long-standing ability to operate as separate task units. When situations would warrant independent action of either the amphibious or carrier forces, separate operational taskings would be developed. Detachment and reconstitution would proceed as necessary.

Impetus for refining naval doctrine for the Naval Expeditionary Force concept was received from the fleet commanders-in-chief, headquarters elements, and doctrine commands as they envision political and strategic realities. With the advent of a unipolar world where conflict will most likely be waged on a smaller geographic scale against a less formidably trained and equipped foe, the inherent need to achieve a true integration of all warfare specialties is militarily advisable and economically mandated. As we shift emphasis to the littoral, strike forces must coalesce to achieve success. Further, reduced forces and supporting

structure dictates that we use what we have as efficiently as possible. To not do so risks its loss.

The true change in the NEF concept is its command structure and force integration, not in the task organization already practiced.⁸

CHAPTER III

MARINE AIR GROUND TASK FORCES

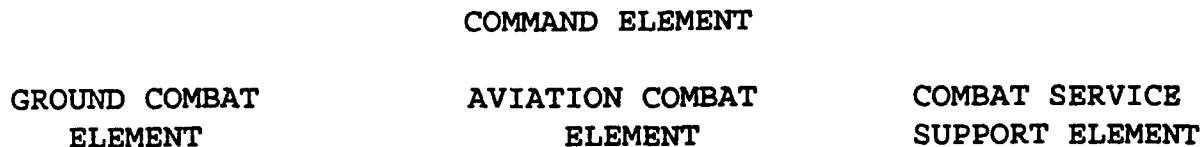
As an integral part of the Naval Expeditionary Force concept, a brief review of the types and functions of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) available to the NETG and NETF commander is needed.

A MAGTF is structured to accomplish a specific mission and is commanded by a single commander.

All MAGTF's, regardless of size, have the same four elements: a command element, a ground combat element, an aviation combat element, and a combat service support element.

FIGURE 1

ELEMENTS OF A MARINE AIR-GROUND TASK FORCE



Four types of MAGTF's exist (in order from smallest to largest)

- Special Purpose MAGTF
- Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)
- Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)
- Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)

Special Purpose MAGTF's are organized to accomplish specialized missions for which another MAGTF would be inappropriate or too large. They provide Marine capabilities for special purposes such as disaster relief or unique instances such as an oil spill.⁹

A MEU is a MAGTF of 1000-4000 Marines and sailors and is organized around a reinforced infantry battalion, a reinforced medium helicopter squadron, and a combat service support organization. A MEU is forward deployed as the immediately responsive, on-scene sea-based Marine component of a fleet commander's amphibious and power projection forces.¹⁰

A MEB is a MAGTF of approximately 18,000 Marines and sailors organized around one or two infantry regiments, a reinforced Marine Aircraft Group, and a combat service support organization. The MEB is the forward echelon of a MEF and can be forward deployed for an extended period.¹¹ The MEB is no longer a standing organization, but a component part of the MEF, able to stand up as a separate organization as the situation warrants.

A MEF is the Marine Corps principal warfighting organization, principally for a MRC or larger. A MEF is organized around one or more Marine divisions, one or more Marine Aircraft Wings, and a combat service support organization.

MAGTF CAPABILITIES

MAGTF's are equipped to give the joint commander

operational flexibility in four specific areas, escalating from peacetime to crisis to war. They are

- Stability Operation • Limited Objective Operations
- Amphibious Operations • Operations Ashore

When aboard amphibious shipping the following specific options are available to the operational commander:

- Move forces into crisis areas without revealing destinations or intentions.
- Operate independently of established airfields, basing agreements, and overflight rights.
- Withdraw rapidly at the conclusion of operations or remain to restore stability to the affected area.

Regardless of size all MAGTF's have the following capabilities:

- Operate under adverse weather conditions and at night.
- Operate from over-the-horizon, without electronic emissions and by surface or air.
- Operate in hostile nuclear, biological and chemical environments.
- Plan and commence execution within six hours of receipt of the warning order.¹²

All these capabilities have an inherent independence of action unique to a self-contained force. MAGTF's remain fully interoperable with joint and combined forces.¹³ They retain the focus of strengthening naval expeditionary capability to support the joint force commander.¹⁴

CHAPTER IV

INTEGRATING THE NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Now that the basis of proposed and existing organizations are clear, what are the difficulties in integrating the MAGTF into the NEF concept?

COMMAND STRUCTURE

Problems arise first in command structure. The NETG provides for the battlefield commander to be augmented as necessary to fill in amphibious and landing force expertise. Staffs must train and function together between deployments and during predeployment workups in order to retain any continuity of effort while deployed. Current command structure of the NEF places too much authority in USN specific warfare areas and de-emphasizes those warfare specialties that will likely be the focus of effort. Specifically, the MAGTF commander, dual-hatted as the LFC, should retain a close working relationship with the NETG staff on a permanent basis, not merely when workups begin. Further, there should be a permanent Marine presence on the battlegroup staff to act as a buffer and common point of reference for the NEF commander and attaching Marine units. Otherwise there will be a lasting void in the ability of the component parts of the NEF (in this case the NEF commander and LFC) to effectively work together.

Additionally, the Deputy Commander of the NETG should be from the service providing the landing force (normally USMC).

This would provide for increased understanding of the MAGTF's mission and put the proper emphasis on the preparations for littoral operations.

The NETF provides for more inherent flexibility, as a numbered fleet commander already has a Fleet Marine Force commander and his staff, who is usually the corresponding MEF commander, to provide the continuity of effort in planning for landing force expeditionary operations.

The NETG/F commander should not be limited only to Navy officers. A NEF, under the command of a Marine, operating under the auspices of a JTF as Naval Component Commander (NCC) of a CINC may best exploit the expertise that a Marine brings to operating a combined arms team in the littoral environment.

SPAN OF CONTROL

The span of control of the different warfare commanders must be detailed in regard to the MAGTF. For instance, does the Air Warfare Commander (AWC) have charge of MAGTF air assets? The answer would be yes, if the NEF was engaged in battlespace dominance. The answer would be no when the MAGTF is engaged in power projection, then only those sorties in excess of MAGTF requirements would be detailed to the AWC, similar to the agreement with the Air Force concerning the Joint Force Air Component Commander as clarified by the Omnibus Agreement of 1989.

Likewise, the Logistics Force commander must not be permitted to divide as necessary the force structure of the

MAGTF's combat service support unit. Those assets should remain dedicated to the sustainment of assigned MAGTF forces.

If MAGTF landing force assets are required for the prosecution of a follow-on land operation or campaign, the entire MAGTF will most likely transition ashore. The NEF should not piecemeal out MAGTF organizations, but, as is currently the case, keep the ability of the landing force to smoothly transition as a complete combined arms team to subsequent operations ashore.

Operations as a "complete" NEF would pose the most difficulties. The combination of the present CVBG and ARG assets operating together in the same geographic area would impose difficulties on both that are unacceptable. Issues such as the relative speed of the ships, overlapping airspace issues, and control of aircraft will take herculean efforts to resolve. Present doctrine as to the allocation of assets under the Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) is not tailored for the incorporation of amphibious shipping and, especially, MAGTF elements.

As previously mentioned, retention of integrity is paramount to the effectiveness of the MAGTF as a combined arms team. This is not mere parochialism. Loss of air or logistic assets would cripple the capabilities of the landing force. Proposed NEF commanders and their staffs are not familiar with the imperative of this concept and the Marine Corps must be quick to insist on the sacrosanctness of the MAGTF.

CHAPTER V

VIABILITY OF THE NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE CONCEPT

It is currently envisioned that the NEF, specifically the NETG, would train together but deploy independently. Is this a good idea? Does this give the operational commander the necessary warfighting capabilities advertised by a NEF?

On its face, it appears it does not. Any dilution of amassed firepower attendant over the full spectrum of capabilities advertised by a complete NETG/F would impair the CINC's ability to respond to expected littoral contingencies. Despite the attendant interoperability obstacles mentioned in the previous chapter it seems that proposed split operations of the components parts of the NEF are purely a cost saving measure. While it may make sense to train together and deploy separately from the comptrollers point of view, consistent long term cohesiveness is only achieved by training and deploying as a team. Otherwise the effectiveness of the NEF in combat will be exposed as a sham. Specifically the ability of those elements of the CVBG portion of the NEF will have only the benefit of what limited training has been accomplished before deployment and will be restricted in their effectiveness in supporting the Landing Force. If present day emphasis by the Navy for the CVBG supporting the ARG is any indicator of its enthusiasm for the task, the NEF must stay together.

But is there a choice? The current philosophy of independent deployment reflects enough shipping to support existing national requirements. With the drawdown of shipping, specifically amphibious shipping, some requirements will simply not be met unless our platforms are an order of magnitude more capable than the ones we are retiring. Yet, monetary shortfalls dictate that we overlap the component parts of the NEF rather than deploy as a whole. This means a loss of capability that may prove unacceptable to the CINC.

Hence the perceived need for the NEF as an adaptive force package. This is simply a moniker for meeting the same requirements with less capability. Economy of force practices such as overlapping, vice concurrent, deployment schedules would defeat the integration efforts needed to build a cohesive warfighting organization.

Further, as noted by the fleet commanders and headquarters staffs, certain "prepackaged" capabilities are desired and assumed to be present in a given deployment configuration. Modifying the content of the force package, such as assigning Special Purpose MAGTF's to carriers, so that the supported CINC gets less than what he expects is not desirable. NEF organization and deployment practices and specifically, MAGTF composition, must be tailored to the forces available to fill them, but, more importantly, they must meet the capabilities required of any expected contingency or deployment situation.

WHICH MAGTF TO USE

Recent events and experimentation in adaptive force packaging shed light on what MAGTF would be most useful to the unified commander as part of a NEF. The Maritime Action Group (MAG) discussion illustrates a successful use of adaptive force packaging. The CV SPMAGTF discussion illustrates a failed initiative.

MARITIME ACTION GROUP

The experiences with the Maritime Action Group of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and the deployment of SPMAGTF's aboard the USS America and USS Theodore Roosevelt are illustrative of the reduced capability such forces bring to the CINC.

First, the Maritime Action Group was developed in response to the protracted unavailability of the CVGB in the Mediterranean. Consisting of two surface ships, a nuclear attack submarine (SSN), and maritime patrol aircraft (P-3), it attempted to fill those missions that could conceivably be carried out without a carrier.¹⁵ It is argued that the changes to the threat make such action warranted, since the reduction in threat potential makes less capable forces more viable. Nonetheless, the MAG is still susceptible to being overwhelmed by an attacking force, unlike the CVBG.

In order to be effective the MAG must employ stealth, deception and movement. Despite its limitations, it

adequately stands in for the carrier when needed. But, is this force package optimal? No. It is a degradation of capability that is forced upon the unified commander.

CV SPMAGTF

Likewise with the recent deployments of a company-sized SPMAGTF aboard two CVN's. (See Figure 2) These forces

Figure 2

COMPARISON OF MEU(SOC) AND CV SPMAGTF CAPABILITIES

MEU(SOC)

Amphibious Raids
 Security Operations
 Limited Objective Attacks
 Mobile Training Teams
 Reinforcement Operations
 Show of Force
 Noncombatant Evacuation Operations
 Civil Military Operations
 Humanitarian/Civil Assistance
 Disaster Relief
 Tactical Deception
 Airfield Seizure
 Counterintelligence Operations
 Initial Terminal Guidance
 Fire Support Control
 Electronic Warfare/Signal Intelligence
 Military Operations in Urban Terrain
 Recovery Operations-Clandestine
 Tactical Recovery of Aircrew and Personnel
 Specialized Demolition Operations
 In-Extremis Hostage Rescue
 Reconnaissance and Surveillance
 Maritime Interdiction Operations
 Operations Involving Gas and Oil Platforms

CV SPMAGTF

Security Operations
 Mobile Training Teams
 Show of Force
 Humanitarian/Civil Assistance
 Disaster Relief
 Tactical Deception
 Counterintelligence Operations
 Initial Terminal Guidance
 Fire Support Control
 Electronic Warfare/Signal Intelligence
 Tactical Recovery of Aircrew and Personnel
 Specialized Demolition Operations
 In-Extremis Hostage Rescue
 Reconnaissance and Surveillance
 Maritime Interdiction Operations
 Operations Involving Gas and Oil Platforms

Source: USCENTCOM/USACOM

displaced a F-14 and S-3 aircraft squadrons in order to provide what is generously termed "a MEU(SOC)-like capability." Upon closer examination it is apparent that this force is only marginally capable of successfully completing fewer missions than the MEU(SOC) at the expense of degraded carrier capability. It is a situation where both the Marines and the Navy, have less capability when their components are combined than when they are separate. Neither the carrier or the SPMAGTF were able to meet the expectations of the unified commander, and in fact, were compelled to reconfigure to a more capable task organization to meet the projected threat and possible missions.¹⁶ It was a sterling example of adaptive force packaging gone awry and a lesson to those planning for the composition and deployment of the future Naval Expeditionary Force.

Circumstances inherent to force structure reductions are, in truth, driving the operational commander's freedom of action. The U. S. simply can not deploy, consistently, any more forces than what has been normal in the past. The policy of a MEU(SOC) on station in the Mediterranean and in the Western pacific is being met, yet we have the additional tasking of a full time MEU in the Indian Ocean since the end of Operation Desert Storm in March 1991. Thus, limitations on shipping and the threat of a "hollow force" are the real denigrators.

The MEU(SOC) will continue as the MAGTF of choice for the foreseeable future. A MEU will be the most easily deployable since a MEB is all the Navy will be able to transport in a one MRC scenario without transferring assets from one coast to the other.

Should the Marine Corps change its MAGTF structure in response to the NEF concept? Emphatically, no. It is the only service experienced in the day-to-day operations in both peacetime and war of the combined arms concept. Further, the present structure works. It will be optimal for the NEF. The Navy Composite Warfare Commander concept is uniquely structured for seaborne warfare, but will need refining as the NEF concept becomes more viable, and as the emphasis switches to the littoral. The internal command and organizational structure of the different NEF's (Appendix I) needs tailoring.

PERSONNEL TEMPO AND OPERATIONAL TEMPO

What is it then that limits the ability to have adequate naval resources available to the CINC? The key can be found in a recent Chief of Naval Operations memorandum to the Commandant of the Marine Corps in response to Marine concerns over amphibious force structure shortcomings that stated

"...I am, however, committed to maintaining PERSTEMPO/OPSTEMPO policy because history convinces me that introducing that as a variable in the forward presence equation will result in reduction in material readiness and retention..."¹⁷

Thus the greater evil of not "taking care of our own" and the "hollow force" in regards to the rigors of deployment is creating deficiencies in the capabilities of the forward deployed forces. While the issue of readiness has tremendous long term consequences, it must be balanced against the real world and the threats encountered by forward deployed units. The use of adaptive force packaging as a means to satisfy personnel and operational tempo mandates is a risky precedent that invites aggression. Eliminate commitments and operational overload but do not sacrifice the capability of the forces that are sent in harm's way.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

MAGTF's remain a viable and needed warfighting formation capable of bringing those attributes most needed for naval expeditionary warfare in the littoral.

MAGTF's emphasize combined arms doctrine, which can be used for refining the Navy's Composite Warfare doctrine to best utilize naval assets.

Operational commanders must insist on a specified degree of capability from naval expeditionary forces, dependent on the threat and not on risks to personnel management.

Command and organizational structures of the NEF must be streamlined and emphasize rapid action planning and integrated Navy-Marine Corps operations.

Adaptive Force Packaging must competently incorporate adequate assets for the given mission. The temptation to use a less capable force because it is the only one available must be resisted by the unified commanders. Moral character will play an important part in determining how far is too far in regards to operational necessity.

MAGTF incorporation into the NEF need to be on a more co-equal status than currently envisioned. Since the focus of effort will more likely be the Landing Force, Composite Warfare doctrine must adjust to incorporate include the MAGTF as a full partner.

Marines should command NEF's.

APPENDIX I

NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE COMMAND ORGANIZATION

NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY TASK GROUP

Landing Force
Commander*

Amphibious Warfare
Commander*

Air Warfare
Commander*

Sea Warfare
Commander

Area Air Defense
Commander*

Space/Electronic Warfare
Commander*

NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY TASK FORCE

Landing Force
Commander*

Amphibious Warfare
Commander*

Air Warfare
Commander*

Sea Warfare
Commander

Area Air Defense
Commander*

Logistics
Commander*

Space/Electronic Warfare
Commander*

Blue/Green Integrated Staffs Source: Naval Doctrine Command

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